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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5621
INFO RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9365
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 1006
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0298
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 2601
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 8171
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 8255
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1897
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0393
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0024
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 001832

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR SCA/PB, SCA/EX
DCHA/OFDA FOR ROBERT THAYER
AID/W FOR AA MARK WARD AND ANE ANNE DIX
DCHA/FFP FOR MATTHEW NIMS AND PAUL NOVICK
BANGKOK FOR RDM/A TOM DOLAN, ROB BARTON
KATHMANDU FOR USAID OFDA BILL BERGER
TREASURY FOR ELIZABETH WEISS AND SUSAN CHUN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [OVIP](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE VISITS BANGLADESH

REF: A) DHAKA 1808

11. (SBU) Summary: Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance and USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore November 20 visited Bangladesh to assess damage from Cyclone Sidr and offer USG support for relief efforts. During her visit she conducted an aerial survey of cyclone-hit regions, met with the Bangladesh Chief Adviser, handed over 35 tons in relief supplies, met international donors and relief organizations, and was briefed by the U.S. military's humanitarian assistance survey team. Administrator Fore's visit received wide and favorable media coverage. Bangladeshi interlocutors welcomed both Administrator Fore's visit and USG humanitarian assistance, noting a need for immediate aid as well as long-term support as Bangladesh slowly recovers from the devastating effects of the cyclone. End Summary.

12. (U) Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance and USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore November 20 visited Bangladesh, which is still reeling from the destruction caused by Cyclone Sidr. (reftel and septels) Administrator Fore, joined by Charg d'Affaires a.i. Pasi, USAID Mission Director Rollins, and Bangladesh Secretary for Food and Disaster Management Dr. Ayub Miah, surveyed by air a portion of the region hit hardest by the cyclone. As the delegation flew over the southwest coastal district of Barguna, it noted widespread damage caused to homes, crops and business enterprises. Banana trees were snapped, rice paddies were awash in seawater, and even large ferries were tossed aground by the powerful cyclone.

BANGLADESH'S CHIEF ADVISER IDENTIFIES NEEDS

13. (SBU) In a meeting with Administrator Fore, Bangladesh Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed thanked her for the condolences and support pouring in from the United States, and noted President Bush's and Secretary Rice's messages. He welcomed continued USG humanitarian

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assistance, though he noted that all relief efforts need to be coordinated under "the umbrella" of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB). The Chief Adviser said Bangladesh had immediate and long term needs in the wake of the cyclone. He identified an immediate

need for food, including rice, wheat, lentils and edible oil; cash to rebuild homes and restore farms; and drinking water. The Chief Adviser noted that many roads and road embankments had been washed away by the cyclone; these networks are important to Bangladesh's economic growth.

14. (SBU) The Chief Adviser also focused on the country's medium- and long-term requirements following the cyclone, in particular the need to restore livelihoods and infrastructure. The Chief Adviser said he is pushing the GOB to distribute cash, in addition to supplies, as part of its relief efforts. By giving cash, cyclone victims have the power to manage their response to the tragedy; they can use the cash to help repair their homes or their livelihoods, whichever is needed most. Cash disbursement also bolsters the local economy more broadly, he observed. The Chief Adviser also noted the need for Bangladeshis to rebuild in new ways.

15. (SBU) The Chief Adviser told Administrator Fore that over the long term Bangladesh's infrastructure, which already faces constraints, will need major repairs, including roads, road and river embankments, and rural electrification networks. The Chief Adviser said the GOB particularly desires USG assistance in this area. He observed that it was too soon to tell how the cyclone would affect economic growth in Bangladesh this year, but there would certainly be a dip in agricultural production, which has already been affected by heavy monsoonal flooding earlier in the year. He noted the need for new roads to bring economic growth to a greater number of people.

RELIEF SUPPLIES FOR 12,000 ARRIVE

16. (U) At Zia International Airport, Administrator Fore presented 35 tons of recently-arrived relief supplies to Dr. Ayub Miah, the senior GOB representative coordinating disaster relief. The supplies, which include temporary shelter materials, jerricans and

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hygiene kits for 12,000 families, will be distributed by USAID donor partners CARE and Save the Children.

ADMINISTRATOR FORE MEETS WITH DONORS

17. (U) Administrator Fore met with chiefs of mission from the UK, Canadian and Australian High Commissions; chiefs of party from DFID, UNDP, Save the Children (US), CARE, and World Vision; and a representative from the International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent. Discussions focused on distinguishing short-term relief needs from medium to long term reconstruction efforts. The group identified immediate needs as potable water, food, temporary shelter, and logistical support to move donations and other domestically available supplies such as medicine. From initial surveys it is also evident that varying needs exist across the affected areas.

18. (U) The group's consensus was that the long term disaster recovery effort presents broad challenges associated with the subsistence-level conditions of economic development for the impacted communities. Given the predisposition of much of Bangladesh to this sort of catastrophe, changes are needed in dwelling patterns and community design. For landless people without fixed assets, sustained economic opportunity is the only solution to the status-quo conditions of poverty, which are only exacerbated by the economic shocks caused by natural disasters.

VISIT RECEIVES BROAD PRESS COVERAGE

19. (U) Administrator Fore's visit received wide media coverage from both domestic and foreign press. All major Bangla and English language daily newspapers carried stories on her trip. She was interviewed by ABC and CNN. Her CNN interview was broadcast live at 7 p.m. local time November 20 during CNN International's World News Asia newscast and was carried by CNN US and CNN Radio.

COMMENT

110. (SBU) Administrator Fore's visit, as well as the USG assistance

being mobilized, has been welcomed in Bangladesh. Bangladeshis are aware of USG support received during the nation's 36-year history, including during national calamities. This message resonated during Administrator Fore's visit, as she referred to her 1991 visit following another devastating cyclone, when she was an Assistant USAID Administrator.

110. (U) Administrator Fore cleared this message.

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